

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

EB-07 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /066 W

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R 272140Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2964

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 4748

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, VE, CU

SUBJ: REPORTED GOV SUSPENSION OF CUBAN AIRLINE FLIGHTS

REF: STATE 92678

1. ACCORDING TO MARIANO TIRADO, CHIEF, TRANSPORTATION SECTION, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, NO FORMAL SCHEDULE OF FLIGHTS OF CUBAN AIRLINES WAS EVER GRANTED TO CUBA BY THE GOV AND NO BILATERAL AIR AGREEMENT EXISTS.
2. TIRADO STATED THAT A TACIT AGREEMENT, "NOTHING IN WRITING", HAD BEEN ACHIEVED WHEREBY CUBAN AIRLINES WOULD RECEIVE ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL ON A CASE-BY-CASE FOR "DIRECTED TOURISM" FLIGHTS CARRYING VENEZUELAN CARACAS-HAVANA-CARACAS. IT DEVELOPED THAT THESE FLIGHTS TOOK ON A PERIODICITY OF APPROXIMATELY ONE FLIGHT PER WEEK.
3. RECENTLY, ACCORDING TO TIRADO, CUBAN AIRLINES VIOLATED THE TACIT AGREEMENT BY INCLUDING SOME PERSONS ON HAVANA-CARACAS FLIGHTS WHO WERE NOT PART OF THE "DIRECTED TOURISM" PROGRAMS. FOR THIS BREACH, CUBAN AIRLINES WAS FINED \$20,000 BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION (DCA) AND CUBAN AIRLINES WAS INFORMED THAT THEIR "DIRECTED TOURISM" FLIGHTS WOULD NO LONGER BE PERMITTED.
4. ON APRIL 20 A "SPECIAL" CUBAN AIRLINES FLIGHT WAS AUTHORIZED

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BY THE DCA AND WAS REPORTED BY TIRADO TO HAVE BROUGHT CUBAN

JOURNALISTS AND OFFICIALS TO CARACAS.

5. BOTH TIRADO AND GENERAL SUAREZ, DCA, HAVE STATED THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO DENY CUBAN AIRLINES REQUESTS FOR "SPECIAL" FLIGHTS.

6. TIRADO INFORMED AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE CUBANS HAVE BEEN SEEKING A BILATERAL AIR AGREEMENT, BUT THAT HE HAS INFORMED THEM THAT THE GOV IS NOT INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATING AN AGREEMENT AT THIS TIME. TIRADO SAID THAT VIASA HAS INSUFFICIENT EQUIPMENT TO FLY A CUBAN ROUTE AND THUS THERE COULD BE NO RECIPROCITY IN A BILATERAL AGREEMENT. FURTHER, HE SAID THAT BECAUSE OF CUBA'S ANGOLAN ADVENTURE, VENEZUELAN-CUBAN RELATIONS HAVE COOLED. TIRADO SEES THE PROMOTION OF VENEZUELAN-TOURISM IN CUBA AS A MEANS OF CUBAN POLITICAL PENETRATION OF VENEZUELA. GENERAL SUAREZ ECHOES THIS NOTION. SUAREZ TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE CUBANS WERE SIMPLY TAKING VENEZUELAN TO CUBA FOR QUICKIE COURSES IN COMMUNISM AND SENDING THEM HOME WITH THEIR HANDS FULL OF PAMPHLETS.
SHLAUDEMAM

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